SORBONNE UNIVERSITY ABU DHABI

SND | SCIENCES NORMES DÉMOCRATIE
SORBONNE UNIVERSITÉ/LETTRES



Research Conference

Is AI limitless?

Monday 24 & Tuesday 25 November 2025
9 am - 5 pm

Zayed Theatre, SUAD Campus

OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY · OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY ·

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE · ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ·



Summary

This conference aims to examine the question of the limits of AI from two different and complementary angles; that of the philosophy of AI and that of the ethics of AI. These approaches examine both aspects of the question, ontological and normative: can AI really be limitless? Should AI be limitless?

1) Philosophy of AI

Can artificial intelligence become intelligent? or sentient? Recent developments in AI are raising with new acuity questions that have been at the heart of the philosophy of AI for decades. This first part of the conference will focus on the question of whether the current state of AI and its plausible prospects for evolution are likely to reshuffle the cards in the controversies that are at the heart of the philosophy of AI.

Is AI doomed to remain eternally weak, particularly because of its “semantic blindness”, in the sense of the distinction between weak AI and strong AI made in the 1980s by the philosopher John Searle? Is “strong AI”, which would pierce the wall of semantic blindness and even manage to become conscious or at least “sentient”, and endowed with intentions and emotions, impossible in principle? The first part of the conference will focus on the current state of this controversy in the philosophy of AI.



2) Ethics of AI

AI promises to enhance human life by improving the efficiency and accuracy of critical domains such as medicine, transportation, education, and environmental sustainability. Yet, AI systems are not infallible: as human-designed tools, they inherit human limitations and biases. How, then, can we assign moral responsibility for AI's decisions and mistakes? Given the diversity of ethical theories (consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics…), which moral frameworks should guide AI design, and how to navigate conflicts between competing norms?

In particular, the conference will focus on the relation between AI and Law. Algorithms capable of processing huge amounts of data have enabled the "digitalisation of law". This has led to intelligent systems for predictive justice and legal information management. However, as AI becomes increasingly integrated into the legal system, how can the preservation of fundamental legal values be guaranteed? These fundamental values include equal treatment before the law, public, impartial and independent settlement of legal disputes, justification and explanation of legal decisions, the possibility of appealing against decisions, procedural fairness and due process, and transparency in legal processes. It is possible that the use of AI in the legal domain could both diminish and reinforce the way in which these values are actually expressed within the legal system or, more subtly, modify their balance in relation to one another. This part of the symposium will examine the ethics of AI in law in the light of the most recent developments in the generative AI systems used.

Programme

Monday, November 24th 2025

9:00 - 9:20
Welcome Address

H. E. Nicolas Niemtchinow (Ambassador of France to the United Arab Emirates) and **Dr Bertrand Haan** (Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs at Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi)

9:20 - 9:30
Introduction

Dr Jean-Cassien Billier (Sorbonne Université Paris) and **Dr Claude Vishnu Spaak** (Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi)

Morning Session: Epistemological and Ontological Questions

Session Chair: **Prof Gianluca Manzo** (Sorbonne University)

9:30 - 10:15
The Mirage of Artificial General Intelligence

Prof Daniel Andler (Sorbonne Université Paris / French Academy for the Political and Moral Sciences)

10:30 - 11:15
What is Thinking?

Prof Taylor Carman (Barnard College, Columbia University)

Coffee Break

11:45 - 12:30

Circling the Void: Lacan, the Symbolic Machine, and the Ontological Limits of LLMs

Dr Jessica Davis (American University Sharjah)

Lunch

Afternoon Session: AI Ethics

14:00 - 14:45

Towards an AI Ethical by Design

Prof Vanessa Nurock (University of Côte-d'Azur / UNESCO Eva Chairholder)

Coffee Break

15:00 - 15:45

In the Loop. AI and Moral Responsibility

Dr Jean-Cassien Billier (Sorbonne Université Paris)

Tuesday, November 25th 2025

Morning Session: Philosophy of Mind and Phenomenological Perspectives on AI

9:30 - 10:15

The Frame Problem of AI

Dr Claude Vishnu Spaak (Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi)

10:15 - 11:00

Misunderstanding AI, Misunderstanding Ourselves: On Phenomenological and Moral Blindness

Dr John Rogove (Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi)

Coffee Break

11:30 - 12:15

Enigmatic Machines. A History and Philosophy of Surprise in AI

Dr Alban Leveau-Vallier (Sorbonne Nouvelle)

Lunch

Afternoon Session: AI in Applied Ethics and Law

14:30 - 15:15

EU AI Governance: A Technical Deliberation

Dr Arnaud Latil (Sorbonne Université)

15:15 - 16:00

What Does AI Teach Us About the Concept of Legal Knowledge?

Dr Nicolas Catelan (Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi)

Coffee Break

16:30 - 17:15

Can the Function of Judgment be Delegated to an AI System in a State Governed by the Rule of Law?

Olivier Courson (Sorbonne Université / Cour des comptes [French Court of Accounts])

17:30 - 18:15

Why Do We Need an Ethics of AI in Defence?

Prof Mariarosaria Taddeo (Research Group on Digital Ethics and Defence Technologies, University of Oxford)